

Message Text

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16

ACTION EB-07

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7958

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PASS AGRIC/FAS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EARG, PO

SUBJECT: 1976 GRAIN AND OILSEED FORECAST

1. PROLONGED DROUGHT CONDITIONS WORSENER BY UNUSUALLY HIGH TEMPERATURES HAVE REDUCED PORTUGAL'S GRAIN AND OILSEED PRODUCTION PROSPECTS FOR CALENDAR 1976. DESPITE PLANTINGS 19 PERCENT GREATER THAN LAST SEASON'S, WHEAT HARVEST IS EXPECTED TO BE LITTLE CHANGED FROM 1975 TOTAL OF 686,000 METRIC TONS; IT IS LIKELY TO RANGE BETWEEN 630,000 AND 700,000 MT. THIS IS WELL BELOW INITIAL FORECASTS OF 800,000 TONS AND AGRARIAN REFORM-INSPIRED PREDICTIONS OF ONE MILLION TONS.

2. NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STATISTICS (NIS) PREDICTED JUNE 30 THAT CORN YIELDS WOULD BE DOWN SHARPLY. SOWN AREA IS UNCHANGED FROM 1975, BUT DROUGHT AND HEAT HAVE CUT INTO YIELD BY ESTIMATED 19 PERCENT. GROWTH IS STUNTED IN ALENTEJO, BUT NOT SO BADLY IMPAIRED IN NORTH. TOTAL OUTTURN MAY BE EXPECTED TO DECLINE ABOUT 100,000 TONS FROM LAST YEAR'S 520,000.

3. BECAUSE OF BELOW-NORMAL MOISTURE FOR SEVERAL YEARS AND UNCLASSIFIED

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CONSEQUENT DROP OF WATER LEVELS IN SOIL AND

RESERVOIRS, RICE FARMERS PLANTED ONLY ABOUT 76 PERCENT AS MUCH AREA AS IN 1975. (SITUATION ALMOST IDENTICAL WITH REFERENCE TO TOMATOES FOR PROCESSING.)

4. NIS PREDICTED AT END OF JUNE SMALL INCREASE IN BOTH YIELD AND PRODUCTION FOR RYE, OATS, AND BARLEY. AGATT TELEPHONE SURVEY THIS WEEK TENDED TO SUPPORT THIS RELATIVELY LESS PESSIMISTIC FORECAST FOR SMALL GRAINS. SOWN AREA IS GREATER, TOO.

5. SUNFLOWER AREA WAS EXPANDED AS MUCH AS 30 PERCENT IN PARTS OF ALENTEJO, BUT SURVEY INDICATED BOTH SUNFLOWER AND SAFFLOWER CROPS WERE SEVERELY DAMAGED BY MOISTURE DEFICIENCY. THEY ARE PORTUGAL'S PRINCIPAL DOMESTIC SOURCES OF EDIBLE OILSEEDS.

6. NIS NOTED JUNE IS NORMALLY ONE OF DRIEST MONTHS, BUT THIS YEAR WAS WORSE THAN NORMAL. FROM SEPT/75 TO MAY/76, PRECIPITATION COUNTRYWIDE REGISTERED DECLINES OF FROM 30 TO 60 PERCENT OF NORMAL, EXCEPT IN LOWER ALENTEJO AND ALGARVE WHERE DECLINE WAS LESS SEVERE. IN LATE JUNE, LOCALIZED SHOWERS PROVIDED SPOTTY RELIEF, BUT IN OTHER LOCALITIES SUDDEN RAINSTORMS AND HAIL DAMAGED MATURING GRAIN. TWO ALENTEJO GRAIN FARMERS SOME DISTANCE APART TOLD AGATT LATE RAINS HAD REDUCED SPECIFIC WEIGHT OF WHEAT, ONE STATING IT FELL TO 76 KGS/HECTOLITER FROM GOOD AVERAGE OF 81 KGS. RAIN ALSO INTERRUPTED HARVESTING WHICH HAD GOTTEN UNDER WAY LATER THAN USUAL AND DAMAGED GRAIN ALREADY HARVESTED.

7. PASTURE AND FORAGE CROPS ARE AMONG OTHERS SERIOUSLY AFFECTED BY DROUGHT.
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